

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY EUR/SOV:MLEVITSKY:BG

APPROVED BY EUR:JAARMITAGE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 249114

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, UR

SUBJECT: VASEV CALL ON ARMITAGE: CHARTER FLIGHTS

1. SUMMARY: ON OCTOBER 17, DEPARTMENT RAISED CHARTER FLIGHT PROBLEM AGAIN WITH SOVIET EMBASSY, SAYING THAT U.S. WISHED TO PUT MATTER BACK ON POSITIVE TRACK AND STRESSING THAT WE WANT TO AVOID SITUATION IN WHICH FORTHCOMING BILATERAL TALKS WOULD OPEN ON SOUR NOTE. WE PRESENTED PROPOSAL DESIGNED TO BREAK CURRENT IMPASSE ON WORLD AIRWAYS AND AEROFLOT CHARTERS. ACTION REQUESTED. IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT SOVIETS UNDERSTAND OUR PROPOSAL CLEARLY, EMBASSY SHOULD PROVIDE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION WITH TEXT (QUOTED BELOW) AND SHOULD REITERATE POINTS MADE ORALLY TO SOVIET EMBASSY. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING CALL BY SOVIET EMBASSY COUNSELOR VASEV OCTOBER 17, ARMITAGE RAISED CHARTER FLIGHTS PROBLEM, SAYING U.S. WISHED TO PUT MATTER BACK ON POSITIVE TRACK. HE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING A SITUATION IN WHICH THE FORTHCOMING BILATERAL CIVAIR NEGOTIATIONS WOULD
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OPEN ON A SOUR NOTE. ARMITAGE STRESSED CAB LIBERAL

ATTITUDE TOWARD APPROVING OFF-ROUTE CHARTER FLIGHTS AND SAID WE HAD ASSURANCE FROM CAB THAT THIS WOULD CONTINUE. CAB DECISION TO DENY AEROFLOT OFF-ROUTE CHARTERS CAME ONLY AFTER WHAT WE CONSIDERED TECHNICAL, ARBITRARY DECISION BY SOVIETS TO DENY WORLD AIRWAYS REQUEST FOR CHARTER FLIGHTS NEXT SUMMER. ARMITAGE NOTED THAT IMMEDIATELY AFTER THIS DENIAL AEROFLOT MADE PROPOSAL TO WORLD AIRWAYS SOLICITING VERY BUSINESS WORLD HAD PROPOSED AND BEEN DENIED. ARMITAGE ALSO MENTIONED OCTOBER 8 AEROFLOT CHARTER WHICH TERMINATED IN KIEV WITHOUT CAB APPROVAL. FYI. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT DESPITE ASSURANCES TO THE CONTRARY AEROFLOT, OCT. 8, CONDUCTED OFF-ROUTE CHARTER ORIGINATING IN WASHINGTON AND TERMINATING IN KIEV WITHOUT CAB APPROVAL. THIS MATTER IS UNDER INVESTIGATION BUT IT APPEARS THAT THE AIRCRAFT CHANGED FLIGHT PLAN TO MOSCOW IN WASHINGTON AND SWITCHED BACK TO KIEV IN LONDON. THE PASSENGERS UNDERSTOOD THEIR DESTINATION WAS KIEV. END FYI. ARMITAGE STRESSED IMBALANCE IN FAVOR OF SOVIETS ON CHARTER FLIGHTS, BUT SAID WE UNDERSTOOD THIS AND THAT IT DID NOT POSE A PROBLEM FOR US PER SE.

3. VASEV RESPONDED THAT MAIN PROBLEM FOR SOVIETS WAS WITH INTOURIST. WORLD AIRWAYS PROPOSED FLIGHTS WOULD COME AT "AWKWARD" TIME, AT HEIGHT OF TOURIST SEASON. SINCE THE PROPOSAL WAS FOR SHORT VISITS TO MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD, IT WAS UNATTRACTIVE FOR INTOURIST IN TERMS OF BOOKING TOURS AND HOTEL SPACE. INTOURIST PREFERRED TOURS OF LONGER DURATION AND WITH MORE CITIES INVOLVED. VASEV SAID THAT DURING RECENT MEETING OF TRADE AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL, HEAD OF INTOURIST, BOYCHENKO, HAD MENTIONED THIS PROBLEM TO CAB DIRECTORS. HE SAID THAT IF WORLD AIRWAYS PROPOSAL REMAINED AS PROPOSED SOVIETS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE COMPANY. AS FAR AS INTOURIST IS CONCERNED, IT DOES NOT MATTER WHICH COMPANIES BRING IN TOURISTS SINCE EVEN IF NEITHER AEROFLOT NOR AMERICAN COMPANIES ARE INVOLVED, NUMBER OF TOURS HANDLED BY INTOURIST AT PEAK OF SEASON WILL BE THE SAME. CHARTERS SUCH AS WORLD AIRWAYS ARE MOST ATTRACTIVE TO INTOURIST DURING OFF-SEASON WHEN TOURIST FACILITIES IN USSR ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT AT FULL CAPACITY.

4. ARMITAGE RESPONDED BY AGAIN REFERRING TO IMBALANCE ON SOVIET SIDE, NOTING THAT THIS PROVIDED AMPLE COMMERCIAL

GROUND FOR SOVIETS TO BE ACCOMMODATING TO WORLD AIRWAYS

PROPOSAL WHICH WAS "NOT OVERWHELMING." DURING PAST YEAR SOVIETS HAVE HAD MORE FREQUENT REGULAR FLIGHTS AND THREE-TO-TWO ADVANTAGE IN CHARTERS. ARMITAGE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT SOVIETS WOULD RECONSIDER DECISION ON WORLD AIRWAYS REQUEST AND OPEN WAY FOR CONSTRUCTIVE BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WHICH ARE DUE TO BEGIN NOVEMBER 17. IN AN EFFORT TO BREAK CURRENT DEADLOCK AND RESOLVE IMMEDIATE CHARTER QUESTIONS FACING BOTH COUNTRIES, ARMITAGE SAID U.S. WAS PREPARED TO MAKE FOLLOWING PROPOSAL: IF SOVIETS WOULD APPROVE WORLD AIRWAYS PROGRAM PROMPTLY, U.S. WOULD (1) APPROVE PENDING AEROFLOT CHARTERS, AND (2) GIVE AEROFLOT A CREDIT OF 20 CHARTER FLIGHTS AFTER MARCH 31, 1976 (WHEN CURRENT AGREEMENT EXPIRES). ARMITAGE GAVE VASEV NON-PAPER (TEXT FOLLOWS) OUTLINING U.S. UNDERSTANDING OF CURRENT SITUATION AND INCORPORATING THIS PROPOSAL.

5. VASEV SAID HE COULD NOT RESPOND IMMEDIATELY BUT WOULD BRING U.S. PROPOSAL TO ATTENTION OF SOVIET AUTHORITIES, EMPHASIZING POINTS ARMITAGE HAD MADE, AND WOULD LET US KNOW PROMPTLY OF SOVIET RESPONSE.

6. BEGIN TEXT NON-PAPER:

IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THE UNITED STATES AND THE USSR WILL BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE AN APPROPRIATE UNDERSTANDING RELATING TO CHARTER AIR SERVICES DURING THE TALKS WHICH BEGIN ON NOVEMBER 17 WHICH WOULD ALLOW CHARTER FLIGHTS BY THE AIRLINES OF BOTH COUNTRIES TO CONTINUE TO BE OPERATED AFTER THE EXPIRATION OF THE CURRENT UNDERSTANDING ON MARCH 31, 1976. HOWEVER, BOTH COUNTRIES APPEAR TO BE FACED WITH IMMEDIATE CHARTER QUESTIONS WHICH IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO RESOLVE BEFORE THE NOVEMBER 17 TALKS AND WHICH THREATEN TO COMPLICATE THESE NEGOTIATIONS UNLESS

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SOME PROMPT SOLUTION IS FOUND.

AS THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES ARE AWARE, WORLD AIRWAYS DESIRES TO OPERATE A PROGRAM OF 20 CHARTER FLIGHTS IN THE SUMMER OF 1976. THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES INDICATED DIFFICULTIES WITH THIS REQUEST, APPARENTLY BECAUSE THE FLIGHTS WOULD TAKE PLACE AFTER THE CURRENT CHARTER UNDERSTANDING EXPIRES. ONLY WHEN IT BECAME EVIDENT THAT APPROVAL OF THE WORLD AIRWAYS PROGRAM WAS NOT FORTHCOMING DID THE CAB DENY PENDING AEROFLOT APPLICATIONS.

SINCE THE UNITED STATES FULLY INTENDS TO CONTINUE IN EFFECT AN APPROPRIATE ARRANGEMENT ON CHARTER FLIGHTS

AND SINCE THE CAB HAS TRADITIONALLY ADOPTED A LIBERAL ATTITUDE TOWARD CHARTER REQUESTS BY AEROFLOT, THE U.S. AUTHORITIES HOPE THAT THE USSR WILL APPROVE THE WORLD AIRWAYS PROGRAM AND THAT SUCH APPROVAL WILL BE GIVEN PROMPTLY SINCE OTHERWISE THE PROGRAM MAY HAVE TO BE ABANDONED DUE TO INADEQUATE LEAD TIME. IF SUCH ACTION WERE TAKEN, THE CAB WOULD BE ABLE, AS IT HAS ALREADY INDICATED, TO APPROVE PENDING AEROFLOT CHARTERS.

IN ADDITION, IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHARTER FLIGHTS AFTER MARCH 31, 1976 ARE NOT YET DEFINITE, THE U.S. AUTHORITIES WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER GIVING AEROFLOT A CREDIT OF 20 CHARTER FLIGHTS AFTER MARCH 31, 1976. END TEXT.

7. ACTION REQUESTED. IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT SOVIETS UNDERSTAND OUR PROPOSAL ON CHARTERS CLEARLY, EMBASSY SHOULD PROVIDE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION WITH TEXT OF NON-PAPER AND REITERATE POINTS MADE BY ARMITAGE AS SUMMARIZED IN PARA 1 ABOVE. INGERSOLL

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